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## Educational Writings

### REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

*Rural education.*—The problem of bringing to rural communities educational advantages comparable to those of the town or city has for some years past engaged the attention of those interested in national welfare. The fact that almost one-half of our population may be said to be of rural composition lends significance to the problem. Not only so, but the fact that it is next to impossible to obtain country-school teachers with training of a sort fitting them to cope with their peculiar educational and social needs renders the situation the more difficult.

Mr. Davis has brought together in his readable volume<sup>1</sup> summaries of his experience as a country-school teacher and of his observations of those who have made conspicuous successes in this field. He maintains that the outstanding need of rural communities is efficient leadership. He says:

The successful teacher in the centralized rural high school of the twentieth century must possess the combined abilities of "community manager," "social engineer," and educator. He must be the social and industrial light as well as the intellectual light of the people he serves [p. iii].

Proceeding on this basis, he sets forth common causes of failure as well as the more positive suggestions as to what has been done by way of securing conspicuous successes. These successes are due to the power of discerning community needs, and likewise of supplying the leadership essential to bringing the people to two things: first, to want better educational advantages and, second, to be willing to co-operate in getting and maintaining them.

The book abounds with happy illustrations, and each chapter ends with a series of thought questions and a short bibliography.

Some of the topics treated are "Getting the School before the People," "The Social Factor in Rural Life," "The Community Idea in Public Education," "School Taxes in Country Districts," "The Public School and the Health of the Community," "The Rural-School Museum," and "Larger School Units in the Country."

The book is well adapted for use as a text in rural-school reading circles, or as a reader in those classes preparing teachers for rural service.

*The psychology of childhood.*—Very much of the early literature of child study in America was characterized by a loose, popular style and scientific

<sup>1</sup> E. E. DAVIS, *Twentieth-Century Rural School*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1920. Pp. viii + 242.

inaccuracy. The lack of accurate and carefully controlled investigations produced a noticeable slowing down in the initial overenthusiasm of the movement. Since that time there has been slowly developing a smaller body of scientific literature made up of studies of various factors of child life. Much of this material, which must form the foundation for a psychology of childhood, is written in technical terms and is scattered through various publications. In order to bring together the best material now available on child study, and to present it in readable form for the general reader, Mrs. Cabot has written a book<sup>1</sup> which covers the period from birth to maturity.

The content of the book can be judged somewhat by the seven ages into which childhood is divided. The first of these, the "Age of Infancy," includes the first two years of life. The discussion in these chapters centers around the early play interests, the origin of moral ideas and behavior, and the development of language. The second period, reaching to the age of seven, is characterized the "Dramatic Age." During this period comes the dawn of responsibility and the effort, on the part of the child, to enter into the social obligations of community living. The third period from seven to eleven, which is rather appropriately named the "Angular Age," covers the period during which, in terms of Lowell, the child "has loudened to a boy." Mrs. Cabot characterizes this as a period in which there is a hunger for facts, and a predominance of rougher physical activities. The "Paradoxical Age" covers the two years from twelve to fourteen, years in which the adolescent change is prominent. In the fifth section of the book the author presents the "Age of the Gang," which overlaps somewhat the other ages and is concerned with both the positive and negative values of gang experience. The "Age of Romance," from fifteen to eighteen, and the "Age of Problems" make up the last two sections of the book.

Regarding the method of classification the author speaks as follows:

Is there any good reason for thus cleaving child life into periods and especially into *seven* periods? A rainbow, exquisitely blending the seven colors of the spectrum, refuses any dividing lines between the shades. So any division of the continuous and subtly changing life of a child is arbitrary and, I might add, intrusive. Even more it must seem artificial to cut into exactly seven periods, like slices of a pie, the life of the groups of American children whom I have chosen to study. I agree that the procedure is an imperfect one; nevertheless I believe it illuminates rather than obscures childhood. Not to distinguish is to extinguish. . . . Children are enchantingly unlike one another; but they are also alike, both in characteristics of each era and in the succession of epochs. Life, the steersman of their fragile boat, is guiding them through channels marked out by the race. To find what is alike is our greatest help in education as in medicine. Only when we see both the common problems and the unique response of any child can we assist him wisely.

Classification, then, when it is free from solemnity and rigidity, will help us to recognize our children at first sight; it may also—and this is to me far more signifi-

<sup>1</sup> ELLA LYMAN CABOT, *Seven Ages of Childhood*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921. Pp. xxxiv+321. \$2.75.

cant—develop in us the power of second sight and third and fourth sight! On the solid foundations of what is common we may learn what is unique [pp. xxiii–xxiv].

The author shows herself to be in touch with the modern literature of child psychology. She presents this in a style which is at once entertaining and clear. The introductory chapter gives a general survey of the recent literature, which will serve as a convenient guide for the further interests of the reader. The book deserves wide reading, and is an excellent example of the careful presentation of accurate technical material in a lucid, popular style. It will doubtless be of more service to the average elementary-school teacher than would many of the more scientific treatments.

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*Educational reorganization.*—One of the outstanding problems confronting educators is that concerning the adjustment of aims set up for each subject in the curriculum. “Objectives” and “outcomes” have been two words much in evidence for a few years past. The curriculum-makers have been compelled to defend their objectives and the teachers the outcomes.

One of the most vigorous exponents of the movement looking toward revaluation and the recasting of the whole curriculum has been Dr. David Snedden. His recent volume<sup>1</sup> serves to bring together in an exceedingly interesting group several of his articles which have appeared in educational and popular journals. These reflect, of course, his thinking in this important field of educational endeavor.

The title of the book suggests, in the main, the basis for his contentions. He maintains that traditionalism has thus far determined the subjects now found in the curriculum, and individualism the vague outcomes. All of this is wrong. He would find the aims in the needs of society, and utilize psychology as an instrument for their guidance. He says:

The time is ripe to begin a careful examination of the possible contributions of sociology and social economy to education. From sociology must come answers to the question, What shall be the aims of education? From psychology must come answers to the question, What is the educability of the individual? and, How shall we best instruct, train, or otherwise educate toward predetermined goals? [p. 15].

We can have no satisfactory set of working principles in the construction of curricula until we possess fairly acceptable analyses, qualitative and quantitative, of the *values* of social life [p. 19].

Sociologists and educators are to co-operate in the discovery of social defects, social needs, and social values. The objectives derived therefrom must be as wide as life itself, and so fluid as to flow in every current of social life. It is admitted that with our present knowledge only beginnings can be made, but these may serve to break down prejudice and tradition. Our present schools may well be extended and readjusted to meet certain needs, while new types of schools with “specialized aim, equipment, and supervision

<sup>1</sup> DAVID SNEDDEN, *Sociological Determination of Objectives in Education*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1921. Pp. 322.